

Jana sat in the locker room after gym class with her head hung low. Tryouts were going to be held tomorrow for the boys' softball team, but girls were not invited. There was not a girls' softball team and Jana really wanted to play softball. "It's not fair," Jana thought, "that only boys can play on the team."

Suddenly Jana had an idea. True, the tryouts were only for boys, but what if she dressed as a boy and went to the tryouts? Would anyone know her? Jana was about the same size as the boys in the fourth grade. If she put her hair up in a cap and pulled the cap down low over her eyes, maybe no one would recognize her. The more Jana thought about the idea, the better it sounded.

The next day Jana showed up for the tryouts in an old pair of jeans, a ragged T-shirt, and a baseball cap pulled low over her face. She told the coach in a lowered voice that her name was Joe. One by one, the boys showed the coach how they could hit a ball, catch a ball, and run the bases.

When Jana's turn came she felt scared inside. What if she couldn't hit a ball as well as the boys? What if she wasn't picked for the team? "Oh, I know I can do as well as any of these old boys," she thought, and with that, she stepped up to bat. The pitcher threw the first ball over Jana's head. "Oh, great, a pitcher who can't pitch," Jana thought. The pitcher threw a second ball that bounced off of Jana's foot. "Come on, pitcher, throw me a good ball," yelled Jana in her lowered voice. This time the ball flew by at a perfect level for Jana. She hit the ball squarely with her bat and watched in surprise as the ball flew into the air and over the fence!

As Jana leaned back to watch the ball fly, her cap fell off of her head and her hair tumbled down her back. "Look, coach, Joe is a girl," yelled the pitcher. "Why, you are a girl!" said the coach as he walked up to Jana. "Oh, coach," said Jana, "I just wanted to play ball and there is not a girls' team." "Well," said the coach, "with a batting arm like that, I think it would be great to have you on the team, girl or not." The coach smiled and Jana smiled back. At last, she was going to have a chance to play softball on a real team.

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